

## **Non-Point Source Resource Guide**

### **Soil Erosion Programs**

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical Help: NRCS provides technical help on all soil conservation activities as called for under Public Law 46. The law helped establish Soil and Water Conservation Districts and provides for the basic conservation program that NRCS carries out—conservation operations. NRCS staff develop conservation plans, design conservation practices, and often help lay them out on the land.

NRCS is also responsible for administering the Conservation Compliance Provisions of the Farm Bill legislation. Under the provisions, landowners are required to control erosion on highly erodible land (HEL) as determined by NRCS, to remain eligible for some USDA programs.

NRCS cooperatively surveys soils on private lands and publishes soil surveys on a county basis. The information in soil surveys is used as a base to provide many of the services available to landowners. Published soil surveys are available for most counties by contacting the local NRCS office. In Iowa, NRCS is making the data available electronically through their web site at: [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov).

NRCS Plant Materials: Under the plant materials program, NRCS develops and distributes plant materials that help with soil conservation and improved water quality. Contact the local NRCS for more information about plant materials.

State Cost Share: The Division of Soil Conservation, working with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, provides cost share for many practices through the Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP). Each district sets its priorities for practices it will fund. Landowners apply through the local Conservation District for state cost share funds.

State Loan Program: The 1983 Iowa legislature established a revolving loan fund to provide loans to eligible landowners at no interest for the construction of permanent soil conservation practices. Eligible landowners may borrow up to \$10,000 for up to a 10-year period. Contact the local Conservation District for information.

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program: NRCS and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) administer EQIP. Local work groups submit project priority area proposals for funding. Landowners in a priority area can make application to the local United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center. Cost share practices, rates, selection criteria and ranking, and sign-up dates are set locally. Landowners not in a priority area are also eligible for cost share if they are treating statewide resource concerns. EQIP is a more holistic approach to resource care than traditional USDA programs. See your local NRCS or FSA office for program information and eligibility requirements.

CRP – Continuous Conservation Reserve Program: FSA and NRCS administer the CRP –Conservation Reserve Program. This program has two ways to enroll. Through the continuous sign-up, landowners can find out if land is eligible, find out the payment they will receive if the land is enrolled and can sign up at any time. Eligible land is automatically accepted into the continuous CRP.

CRP – Conservation Reserve Program: Under the competitive CRP, landowners bid eligible land into the program. Acceptance is in competition with offered land nationally. The Secretary of Agriculture announces dates for general CRP sign-up.

Pheasants Forever: Funding or material assistance to improve CRP, establish CRP filterstrips, riparian buffers, etc., may be available from your local Pheasants Forever chapter.

CFO – Conservation Farm Option: This program was introduced as part of the 1996 Farm Bill. Rules are currently being developed to implement the program. The program allows landowners to consolidate CRP, WRP, and EQIP payments into one annual payment by entering into a 10-year contract and adopting a conservation farm plan which includes measures related to sustainable agriculture.

REAP – Resource Enhancement and Protection Program: Conservation Districts can apply for REAP funding. Based on their submitted proposal and allotment, REAP funds may be available for soil conservation practices through Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

### **Water Quality Improvement Programs**

Technical Help: The NRCS, Department of Soil Conservation (DSC), and Conservation Districts help with the design of small manure management facilities. For larger facilities, these organizations will consult on what is needed. The IDNR will outline regulations for large operations and issue needed permits.

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program: This federal program is aimed at treating all resources – soil, water, air, plants and animals. With an EQIP contract, landowners look at a systems approach, rather than treating for just one resource. EQIP contracts usually have several components.

Local work groups submit projects to be selected for priority areas. Priority areas are ranked by the State Technical Committee. Selected priority areas receive money to carry out their proposals. Sign-up dates, cost share rates, eligible practices, and ranking criteria are decided locally.

In addition to local priority area projects, some funds are used to address statewide concerns. Anyone not in a priority area is eligible for funding if they address a statewide concern.

Iowa Publicly Owned Lakes: The program provides cost-share on permanent soil and water conservation practices to control sediment above publicly owned lakes. Contact your local Conservation District for more information.

EPA Section 319 Program: The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) provides funding for approved water quality projects through the EPA – Environmental Protection Agency – Section 319 program. This provides funding for demonstrations and implementation of water quality practices to protect priority water bodies from farm runoff. Local projects are developed by, and implemented through Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Cost share and incentive payments are available for practices to help solve locally identified problems such as runoff that may include sediment, livestock manure, fertilizer and pesticides.

Iowa Water Protection Fund: This REAP funded program helps install water quality improvement practices in watersheds above priority lakes and streams. Cost share and other financial incentives are provided for practices to control sediment runoff and better manage nutrients, pests, and manure.

Whether a project is federal or state administered, the NRCS, DSC or Conservation District will know about the programs and which water quality practices are eligible for cost share or technical assistance.

Conservation Buffer Initiative: Under the conservation buffer initiative, landowners are encouraged to install buffers or non-cropped areas that improve water quality and also improve wildlife habitat.

More than 20 organizations are part of the buffer initiative in Iowa. Initiative organizations with programs are listed below.

Pheasants Forever: Funding or material assistance to improve CRP, establish CRP filterstrips, riparian buffers, etc., may be available from your local Pheasants Forever chapter.

Continuous CRP – Conservation Reserve Program: This program offers one way to establish a buffer and get paid for the land used. Buffers include, but are not limited to, contour buffer strips, filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, and field windbreaks. Eligible landowners offer land for the program and are paid the average rental rate based on soil type and corn suitability rating (CSR). Contracts are for a 10- or 15-year period. A bonus is paid for some practices. Check locally for specific rules and for land eligibility. NRCS provides technical help in designing a buffer system. FSA administers the program and will handle contracting for rental payment and reimbursement for cost share on practice establishment. To learn more about the program, visit the local USDA Service Center.

Trees Forever Iowa Buffer Initiative: The goal of the Initiative is to increase awareness of the many long term benefits of planting trees, shrubs and grasses as buffers. Trees

Forever is establishing demonstration sites and a network of technical and financial help for landowners.

ISU Extension or NRCS may provide assistance with Integrated Crop Management (ICM), a term used to describe managing crops using methods that determine inputs needed based on current status of the land, crops, and the environment. ICM uses scouting which is determining the needs of the land or plants before treating them with either nutrients or pesticides.

### **Streambank Protection Programs**

NRCS Technical Assistance: NRCS staff provide technical help on streambank stabilization.

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program: Some streambank protection practices are eligible under the EQIP program. Many EQIP priority areas target livestock issues. Fencing livestock out of streams helps stabilize the streambank. Cost share may be available through EQIP. Check locally for information about local practices eligible for cost share.

Continuous CRP – Conservation Reserve Program: Riparian buffers and filter strips can be established along streams under the continuous CRP. The land must meet eligibility criteria of the program. See your county USDA Service Center for program rules.

REAP – Resource Enhancement and Protection Program: Local Conservation Districts can receive REAP funds. Check with the Conservation District to see if they have funds available for improving streambanks.

Pheasants Forever: Funding or material assistance to improve CRP, establish CRP filterstrips, riparian buffers, etc., may be available from your local Pheasants Forever chapter.

Fish and Wildlife Private Lands Funds provide up to 65% for wildlife habitat improvement that may include bank stabilization by rip-rap, bioengineering or a combination of the above. NRCS can offer design assistance and help in applying for all necessary permits. Funding comes through the local Conservation District.